



Games Pack Three – Alternative Debates

Lesson Type

These are a series of 'debate formats' that are unconventional and (often) unserious. They are useful as a light alternative to real debates. Some require silence which can be useful if you want to have multiple groups debating at once, others are good for helping shy students speak out.

Below each 'debate format' has its **name** in bold followed by an explanation of how to play.

The best invention This game is modelled loosely on the idea of a balloon debate and there is an excellent [YouTube short demonstrating it:](#)

For most classes, this game works best in teams of three. Each team are now an invention. (See list below if you are short on ideas.) We advise doing this as a quickfire game where teams are given 20 seconds to make the case, and we whiz around the room. You can then eliminate one team and continue, or just let teams make a second and third case. Alternatively, teams can start responding to other teams.

Inventions: Tea, Coffee, Printing Press, Light bulbs, Denim, Boats, Microwave, Chocolate, Penicillin, Phone, Compass, Camera, Memes.

White Board Debate. This is a **silent** game and thus you can have multiple debates happening at once. Put students into teams- you need a large wall mounted white or smart board for every two teams.

On each white board you write up the topic and draw a line down the middle, with the 'for' side being the left side. 'For' teams get a black pen and 'Against' teams a blue pen.

When you say go the 'for teams' have one minute to write up reasons for their side on their board. After a minute say 'switch' and the opposition team have two minutes to write up responses AND reasons for their side. 'Switch again' and proposition have a final minute to write responses to the opposition.





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White Board Debate Continued...

If any team talks, they lose 10 seconds of writing time.

After the debates are over have teams go around and read other teams boards. They must then give a tick to the team they think have made the better case.

If you don't have enough white boards/smart boards, you can give each team a sheet of A3 paper, or they can write on both halves of an A2.

You can adjust timings for different goals and abilities.

You can ask teams to read out their arguments at the end, for groups that are shy talking in front of the class.

Scaffold: To make it less competitive and intense, if you have multiple white boards in your classroom write up a different topic on each and allow students to go around the class silently with their pens for 5m writing out their opinions.

The 'Debate-it' classroom.

This is a less structured/ more free form game and can be played silent or regular.

In your classroom stick up (or write on wall mounted boards) five or six motions in the form of questions. 'Should we ban zoos?' rather than 'THW ban zoos.'

Students have 5 minutes to go around the class putting up green post it notes- reasons they think YES. Or Red/Orange post-it notes- reasons they think NO.

Now, bring out a third colour of post-it notes for RESPONSES. Students have five minutes to go around and write and stick responses to any of the points. You can tell them to put these responses beside, below or on top of the original points.

This can be an excellent warm up to having a debate, for shy classrooms. After the post it note frenzy, you can invite them to have a classroom discussion or debate having already thought through the issues.





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Throwing my opinions around

This is a fun game and should be done mostly silent but can be quite chaotic.

To start, all students are given a piece of paper which they must write down an opinion on, and a reason or two for it. The opinion cannot be something completely uncontroversial. ('I do not support drowning people for being witches.') Give them 2-3 minutes to do this silently.

Students then scrunch up their paper and throw them around the room multiple times. Everyone should end up with a different piece of paper and not know whose they have. The students must draw a line under the previous opinion and reasoning and give reasons to **oppose** the initial opinion- either direct responses or alternative reasons/perspectives.

Allow for a bit of paper throwing carnage at each turnover, that's the fun part

You can repeat this once or twice more. At the end students can use their piece of paper to give a one-minute argument either for or against the topic they are holding, considering other perspectives but explaining their position.

Roulette Debate

Take whichever debate format you normally do, have the motion announced, prep time and the debate. The difference is the students will not know which team they are on or when they are speaking. They must prepare for all positions. Taking an example of a BP debate, 8 students prepare for the motion individually and then sit down. The teacher picks a student at random (we like to use ['wheel of names'](#)) and that person must give them PM speech. Then the next person is drawn at random and gives the LO speech.

This is a difficult game, but a great one for having students be more off-the-cuff and ready. You may also notice some students are actually better because they've really been considering both sides and engaged in the whole debate because they didn't know when they would be speaking next.

Judge the debate as if it was conventional.





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Insert-a-word.

This is quite a tricky game and one we like to use with advanced students who want a fun lesson. Do a conventional, competition style debate (sometimes with an unserious motion). Where only the speaker can see it have a random word generator- there are plenty online. At the start of each minute, hit the random word generator, the speaker must then include that word in their speech as seamlessly as possible.

At the end of the speech the opposing team guesses the words that the speaker had to incorporate. If it was a three-minute speech, three guesses. The guessing team gets two points for every correctly guessed word. The speaker's team gets one point for every word that snuck through.

Lady of the points

In this classic debate game, every student prepares a typical 5m PM speech (use different motions for each student or it gets boring) just like they would for a full BP debate. The student then gets 7m of speaking time but should try to take and answer 5 POIs from the room and make their arguments. This shouldn't become a press conference/Q&A but should feel like a **good** PM speech where they just happen to have taken a lot of POIs.

Naturally, we never advise students to take that many POIs in competition, but it's excellent practise for both giving and taking POIs. We would advise 5 to 6 students per room, so everyone is asking a POI every speech.





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Modulated Debates

There are lots of small adjustments you can make to a standard format of debating like BP. Different modulations help different things, below is a table with some of the common modulations we make and why.

Shorter prep time	More efficient prepping, a little less note dependent
No notes (or a word count on notes)	Less note dependent, speaking more naturally and conversationally
Shorter speech time	Prioritisation
Pro-ams. (A stronger speaker paired with a much weaker speaker) *These are difficult and should be done sparingly, with good reasoning behind it.	For the pro, exposes weaknesses that may need worked on. Can be useful in helping them remember the basics/the importance of the fundamentals. For the am, they will likely give a better speech if they have someone experienced helping them in prep, they may pick up some good habits and realise what they've been doing wrong. In competition, they will have to take part in tougher rooms than normal if it's a power paired competition. This will stretch them.
Prep helper	Sometimes having a non-speaking member of the team, particularly someone more experienced, can help the team perform better/learn the ropes. For the helper, it can be a nice scaffold into pro-aming and maybe one day helping you coach younger students.
Individual speakers	Doing a conventional BP or worlds style debate but having everyone prep as an individual and speak as an individual can be give good indications of who are the 'idea people' as well as who needs a partner to keep them on task.



